

the two Emperors did their best to throw every available man into the plain of Adrianople, where the two hosts were separated by the river Hebrus. Some days were spent in skirmishing and manoeuvring; then on July 3, 323, a decisive action was brought on, which ended in the rout of the army of Licinius. Constantine, whose tactical dispositions seem to have been more skilful than those of Licinius, secretly detached a force of 5000 archers to occupy a position in the rear of the enemy, and these used their bows with overwhelming effect at a critical moment of the action, when Constantine himself, at the head of another detachment, succeeded in forcing a passage of the river. Constantine received a slight wound in the thigh, but he had the satisfaction of seeing the enemy driven from their fortified camp and betake themselves in hurried flight to the sheltering walls of Byzantium, leaving 34,000 dead and wounded on the field of battle.

Byzantium was a stronghold which had fallen before Maximin after a siege of eleven days, but we may suppose that Licinius had looked well to its fortifications with a view to such an emergency as that in which he now found himself. He placed, however, his chief reliance in his fleet, which was nearly twice as numerous as that of Constantine. Licinius had assembled 350 ships of war, levied, in accordance with the practice of Rome, from the maritime countries of Asia and Egypt. No fewer than 130 came from Egypt and Libya, no from Phoenicia and Cyprus, and a similar quota from the ports of